

Wikis: Nuts and Bolts of a Community Tool for Collaboration



What is a Wiki?

- Hawaiian word for quick that can be set-up in 5 minutes
- Simple and easy to use like a virtual whiteboard
- Collaborate, share, and comment on content posted in a virtual classroom in your class, you're your other classes or classes outside your school
- Engage students in a secure learning environment
- May be used as informational, to showcase student work, to help with homework, increase collaboration, record reflections or class record
- Living document, easily accessible, ever changing

Who can use a Wiki?

- Invited students, teachers, parents or anyone you invite
- Have editorial right to remove unwanted/off topic material

Why use a Wiki?

- Students will write more in an online format
- Easier to collaborate –time and space less of an issue
- Teacher sees the most recent copy of an item
- Teacher monitors for developing problems or misconceptions
- Removes "classroom walls" and opened to more people and resources
- Saves trees

Where to start a Wiki?

- Wikispaces- <http://wikispaces.com>
- PBWorks- <http://pbworks.com>
- GoogleDocs- <http://docs.google.com>
- <http://www.edmodo.com/>

How to create one:

- Its easy and takes less than 5 minutes to create an account
- Choose your Wiki engine i.e. wikispaces.com
- Sign-up for an account, answer questions, --show how-- and agree to terms of service
- Choose to limit permission for who can edit Wiki

Ideas for a Wiki:

- To communicate staff ideas or tract schedules
- To post lessons, images, challenges, questions, or notes
- To discuss or collaborate on projects such a a virtual field trip
- To create a library of science terminology or add review questions for EOGs
- To post daily announcements or reminders for students or parents
- To develop and share lessons or items of interest
- To summarize class lesson or activity daily with any class notes

Source: "Wikis for Science Ed Collaboration", NST Reports, February, 2010

Wiki Page Ideas

Use a creative activity to engage your students on your workspace. Here are some examples. Feel free to add and share your own ideas!

Students

Individual pages - ask each student to create a page, posting information about their interests and what they hope to learn from the class. Be sure to comment on the pages, and engage them by referencing their personal interests in discussions. You can also use this as an easy icebreaker to have students get to know each other.

Group pages - allow groups of students to create wiki pages to work on projects and/or documents together.

Online spelling list or other list of academic language - create a page titled "Spelling" and post your spelling list. Ask students to post the definition, an example or non-example, or upload a corresponding image.

Create a wiki glossary like Wikipedia for your particular unit of study. Students enter important new terms, events or people as well as information this has been uncovered. Students might be encouraged to make one or two sentence entries over a set period of time.

Create a page to list challenges or questions, celebrations or great ideas.

Class notes - each week assign one student to write up the class notes, including important points and class discussion. Be sure to comment on the notes, and add additional insight from the lesson.

Create a wiki page where students can share data on a continuous project.

Use your wiki space to create forums. Invite students (or others) to engage in discussion related to an identified content or interest area. A discussion topic is often called a 'thread' and replies to a thread are called 'posts'. This is useful for posing questions to students and encouraging open communication. It is valuable for students who may need more processing time than that typically given in a class discussion. It can also encourage reflection about the day's activities or at the end of a unit of instruction.

Following a particular current event? You can add an RSS feed for a particular topic from a news Web site such as MSNBC (www.msnbc.msn.com/ (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/>)). As new articles on your topic are posted at MSNBC, the feed on your wiki will be automatically updated.

Parents

Share course information with students such as announcements, review questions, home-based activities that reinforce content, or instructional podcasts.

Post a calendar to share school events as well as pertinent community events. Parents could add pages to this wiki as they work together to plan events related to your classroom or school.

Use a wiki to showcase student artwork, videos, and projects throughout the year.

Colleagues

Use the wiki to create lessons or units of instruction with other grade level teachers OR to create a series of lessons across grade levels related to a certain content area. For example, create a weather wiki where a teacher from each grade level might include a lesson taught. As you look at lessons across grade levels you can think about how content and process is developed.

What are your ideas? Small Group Brainstorming

Virtual field trip across the state

Multi-media storage

Webpage replacement (embedded online program)

Inter-system (international) collaboration

Planning

Signups for parent-teacher conference times

The Finer Details

How to assess Wiki contributions?

This will vary slightly with each Wiki type but most have a 'history' feature that allows you to see who has made what contributions to the wiki. Students can also write commentaries on their contributions and collaborations, even suggesting their own grade.

Peer Assessment

Students can review each other's work.

They can score a peers work based on a rubric and offer suggestions for improvement.

Multiple rounds of peer or self assessment can allow for revising.

Peer review is a real world responsibility and a valuable part of the learning process.

Netiquette

You should work with your students to make decisions about what is appropriate and inappropriate wiki use. These will be your rules of etiquette for online communication. These may be similar to the rules of etiquette in your classroom but may need to be restated in a manner that helps students to see how this 'looks' on the wiki.

What is Google Docs?

Is a website where you can create and share your work online. You can upload (from your computer) or create a document right in Google Docs and then edit it from anywhere at anytime. You can pick who else can access your document to make suggestions or additions. The changes are shared in real time. Best of all, it's free! [<http://docs.google.com> (<http://docs.google.com>)]

What is an RSS feed?

RSS stands for "Really Simple Syndication". It is a web feed format used to publish frequently updated works. The feed usually includes a full or summarized text of the part of the wiki that has been edited. There is usually also other information such as publishing date and authorship. This allows you to get an email everytime someone updates the wiki. Use the 'settings' button on this wiki to enable RSS feed.

What if my students don't have email accounts?

1. Click the 'Settings' button at the top right hand side of the page.
2. Choose 'users'.
3. Click on the link 'Create accounts for your students'.
4. Simply enter in the number of students who need accounts and PBworks will automatically generate them for you.

What are some suggestions for making wiki use in the classroom more effective?

Give students clear instructions

Treat your front page as a short introduction with links to other pages.

Identify assignments and clear directions either on the front page or on a special assignment page. Wiki-based assignments should have a solid purpose that is explicitly communicated to students.

If you have handouts, create a page called "Handouts" and upload the files there.

Attend a Webinar. Many wiki engines offer free webinars to help you further develop your wiki skills.

Educators must learn to take a more facilitator role using wikis. They should:

establish a rich context or problem for the wiki collaboration and end product.

clearly define and share learning goals.

prepare students for collaboration, facilitate group progress and help to manage conflict and distractions.

Lessons Learned

A whole class of students cannot be on the wiki trying to edit the same page at the same time.

Large blocks of text copied and pasted from WORD do not always retain the formatting.

Know who can and cannot access your wiki without a password before attempting to share it with others, in order to avoid confusion and inaccessibility.

Wiki Pages & Files

Search this workspace

Sample Wikis

Here are some sample wikis that have been created on different wiki engines, for different audiences, and for different purposes.

This wiki was created by elementary education preservice teachers at Elon University. They used the wiki to collaboratively plan an ANIMALS unit of science instruction for 4th grade children at Gibsonville Elementary. <http://elongibsonville.wetpaint.com/> (<http://elongibsonville.wetpaint.com/>)

This wiki was created by elementary education preservice teachers at Elon University. They used the wiki to collaboratively plan an ELECTRICITY unit of science instruction for 4th grade children at Gibsonville Elementary. <http://elongibsonville2.wetpaint.com/> (<http://elongibsonville2.wetpaint.com/>)

This wiki was created for a single program (SSA) but for two groups of people: adults and students. I could work from this single wiki but address the two different groups privately. This site is currently password protected. <http://www.wikispaces.com/> (<http://www.wikispaces.com/>)

This wiki was created between my sisters to plan our summer vacation at the beach. It sure beat lots of emails and phone calls and it was nice to have the information contained all in one place. <http://familyatthebeach.pbworks.com/> (<http://familyatthebeach.pbworks.com/>)

This wiki was created by Cornell Lab of Ornithology to facilitate the sharing of science project development during a teacher training this summer. <http://birdsleuth.pbworks.com/> (<http://birdsleuth.pbworks.com/>)

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Helpful Links and Resources

Links

[Glogster.com/edu](http://www.glogster.com/edu) (<http://www.glogster.com/edu>) allows students and educators to access free Web-building tools to create virtual posters with text, images, voice, video, links and more. This is a private Web environment, that does not require the use of student e-mail addresses or personal information. The Web site can be used to create pages for classroom wikis, blogs, Web sites, lesson plans, and student projects. Michelle DeLuties is the contact for this resources, michelle@kelandpartners.com (<mailto:michelle@kelandpartners.com>). (www.glogster.com/edu) (<http://www.glogster.com/edu>)

[Google Gadgets](http://www.google.com/webmasters/gadgets/) (<http://www.google.com/webmasters/gadgets/>) is a Google Web site where you can find all kinds of interesting extras to add to your wiki. The miniature objects are made by Google users and they offer some interesting and dynamic objects. For example, you can add a clock (digital or analog), a real-time weather report, maps, animations, etc. (<http://www.google.com/webmasters/gadgets/>)

[Wikipedia](http://www.wikipedia.org/) (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>) is the most famous of all wikis. In it's simplest form, it is a dynamic encyclopedia that has been created by the masses. (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>) (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>)

[Wiktionary](http://www.wiktionary.org/) (<http://www.wiktionary.org/>) is a collaboratively produced multilingual dictionary with meanings, definitions and pronunciations. (<http://www.wiktionary.org/>)

[Wikimatrix](http://www.wikimatrix.org/) (<http://www.wikimatrix.org/>) is a Web site where you can select multiple wiki engines and compare them across a number of areas. All you do is put a check in the box next to the name of the wiki engines you want to compare and click the button. (<http://www.wikimatrix.org/>)

Resources

Kahn, S. (2009). Wonderful wikis and internet forums. *Science and Children*, 46(9), 27-31.

West, J.A. & West, M.L. (2009). *Using Wikis for Online Collaboration: The Power of the Read-Write Web*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass